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Made in Japan: Kumi-Daiko as a New Art Form

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MADE IN JAPAN:
KUMI-DAIKO AS A NEW ART FORM

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to the most awesome husband in the world, Joseph Viviano. Without his support and encouragement I would have never gotten to this point in my musical career.

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First of all, I am grateful to Dr. Scott Herring, who has been an excellent teacher and mentor throughout my studies at the University of South Carolina. Without his encouragement and aid I would not have been able to finish this program so smoothly from eight hours away.

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In making me a more informed researcher and writer through her class and whenever I had questions at the library, I would like to extend my gratitude to the Head of the Music Library, Ms. Ana Dubnjakovic.

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ABSTRACT

Japanese taiko ensemble drumming, known in Japan as kumi-daiko, is an art form that has only taken shape within the past fifty years. This new performance style involving taiko seems, on the surface, to have much in common with traditional Japanese court and theater music, regarded by scholars as the art music of Japan. Using drums that have a long history in Japan, however, does not necessarily make that ensemble part of ancient Japanese tradition. By studying the most famous groups in Japan, such as Kodo, it is easy to discern that kumi-daiko has many different inspirations, but is not in itself ancient. Along with historical references available from previous musicologists and new first-hand information provided by taiko players themselves, I will show that the art of kumi-daiko pays tribute to, but is not a slave to, the traditions of Japan's musical past. Kumi-daiko, along with most traditional Japanese musics, is mainly transmitted through rote training. As a result, one way to gain an understanding of the larger picture of kumi-daiko becoming its own Japanese art form is through the viewing of live performances. Kodo provides excellent performances that showcase the eclectic pieces of tradition and contemporary music that are melded together to form a kumi-daiko work. Through historical research and performance analysis of the most popular and respected Japanese kumi-daiko group, kumi-daiko will be revealed to be Japan's new evolving musical art form.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“The Way of Taiko is over a thousand years old, and its development has taken many paths in Japan.”¹ This statement is supported in numerous books, journals, and documentaries about taiko drumming. Terry O'Mahoney, in an article about a taiko ensemble, states, “Taiko have been used for centuries in many forms of Japanese music, including gagaku, kabuki, kyogen and noh, as well as for religious ceremonies and festivals.”² The documentary *Spirit of Taiko* further emphasizes the age of this idiom by saying, “One of those [Japanese] ancient traditions is taiko.”³ These statements are verifiably true, but when used in the full context of the works they come from, misconceptions about the meaning of the word *taiko* can arise. The problem with these statements is not their veracity, but that they are used as introductory material for articles about kumi-daiko, or Japanese ensemble drumming.

“Taiko” in Japanese literally means “fat drum.” This word is often used in publications to describe both the instruments themselves as well as traditions in military, religious, court, theater, and folk music. Each music has its own variety of taiko drums, with unique sounds, techniques, and specific purposes within the music. While each drum has its own unique name, because taiko (or the other common Japanese romanization, daiko) is a part of each drum name, the generic

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Heidi Varian, *The Way of Taiko* (Berkeley: Stone Bridge Press, 2005), 16.

² Terry O'Mahoney, “Kodo: Japanese Taiko Masters.” *Percussive Notes* 35 (February 1997), 1.

³ *The Spirit of Taiko*, DVD, by Steven Dung, Dianne Fukami, and Gayle K. Yamada, (Davis, CA: Bridge Media, 2005).

word taiko can and has been used to describe any number of a variety of drums. One must take into account the entire context when the word taiko is being utilized, or the generic use of the word to both describe musical traditions and instruments alike can obscure the meaning being imparted. “Kumi-daiko” is a word that describes a performing ensemble of various Japanese traditional instruments, mostly percussive in origin. It has become a community driven music phenomenon, with thousands of groups world-wide forming over the past eighty years. Kumi-daiko is popularly abbreviated as “taiko,” and as a result can create the misinformed idea that kumi-daiko is a direct off-shoot of traditional musics. The use of taiko in the ensemble, however, does not necessarily make kumi-daiko part of an ancient tradition. Kumi-daiko is a modern musical form that utilizes taiko in its ensemble. Kumi-daiko is too far removed from tradition to be accurately considered an ancient art form.

Understanding the history of the instruments used in a kumi-daiko group and how these instruments were traditionally utilized in Japan's music history is essential to uncovering the metamorphosis that has taken place in Japanese traditional musics over the last fifty years. The structures of many of Japan's traditional musics are very strict in regards to performers, instruments, and techniques. William Malm, an eminent musicologist who has written many books on different aspects of Japanese traditional musics, wrote:

Before launching into a detailed study of the many forms that make up Japanese music, it is wise to reflect that a feeling of confinement has been inbred into the Japanese character by the very geography of the land. Japanese history is the story of crowded masses of men rushing up and down this narrow strip of land; Japanese arts likewise present an attempt to move within very prescribed boundaries. Given these rather rigid limits, one must be prepared to appreciate the consummate skill with which the

Japanese artists were able to refine rather than expand their techniques.⁴

Many of Japan's music traditions, believed to have achieved their fullest development long ago, have remained essentially the same for hundreds of years.⁵ The enduring conventions in the traditional musics helped lead to the development of a new art form in kumi-daiko. It is important to note that the structure of any kumi-daiko group is fluid, with no set rules as to how many people can play in the ensemble or what instruments have to be played. This is a significant cultural and musical development in Japanese music, as it shows that old traditions in music can be re-imagined into something new and inclusive to all of the people of Japan and not just a small population of traditional music experts/performers. Examining the history and repertoire of the most famous kumi-daiko group in Japan, Kodo, reveals the true innovation taking place in Japanese music today. Kumi-daiko, along with most traditional Japanese music, is mainly transmitted through rote training. As a result, one way to gain an understanding of the larger picture of kumi-daiko becoming its own Japanese art form is through the viewing of live performances. Kodo, designated cultural ambassadors of kumi-daiko music throughout the world, provides excellent performances that showcase the eclectic pieces of tradition and contemporary music that are melded together to form a kumi-daiko work.⁶ Through historical research and performance analysis of the most popular and respected Japanese kumi-daiko group, kumi-daiko will be revealed to be Japan's new evolving

⁴ William Malm, *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments* (Rutland, Vermont: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959), 39.

⁵ Carl Wolz, *Bugaku: Japanese Court Dance* (Providence, RI: Asian Music Publications, 1971), 10.

⁶ "Kodo: Frequently Asked Questions," accessed April 7, 2012, http://www.kodo.or.jp/general/faq_en.html.

musical art form.

Need for Study

The purpose of this study is two-fold. There is a lack of scholarly research to correct the common misconception that kumi-daiko is a direct off-shoot of Japanese art music. The other ambition for this study is simply to add new scholarly research into the origins of kumi-daiko. Thanks to the generous subsidizing given by the Japanese government to new taiko groups and schools, there has been a huge growth in the number of people playing in kumi-daiko groups in Japan.⁷ Because famous kumi-daiko groups like Kodo tour all over the world to expose and teach people about kumi-daiko, in North America alone there are over one hundred known kumi-daiko groups to date.⁸ This international popularity, coupled with the previous lack of an established global musical identity, created the misconception that kumi-daiko is an ancient Japanese historical tradition.

This new performance style involving taiko seems on the surface to have much in common with traditional Japanese court and theater music, which are regarded by scholars as the art music of the time. Along with historical references available from previous musicologists and more contemporary information provided by taiko players themselves, I will show that the art of kumi-daiko is a new musical idiom that pays tribute to, but is not a slave to, the traditions of Japan's musical past.

⁷ "Nippon Taiko Foundation," Nippon Foundation official government website, accessed October 14, 2012, <http://www.nippon-taiko.or.jp/english/profile/index.html>.

⁸ "Taiko Groups in North America," Taiko.com website, accessed October 14, 2012, http://www.taiko.com/taiko_resource/groups.html#north.

Related Literature

The topic of kumi-daiko in scholarly research is limited when compared to older Japanese traditional art forms such as kabuki and gagaku court music. It can be speculated that because kumi-daiko is such a relatively new Japanese art form and is constantly evolving, scholastic scrutiny of the topic has not had sufficient time to gain a solid foundation in ethnomusicologists' studies. There are not enough people in the field yet to fill in the gaps in the study of kumi-daiko as much as an older Japanese musical tradition like Shinto festival music. Despite the sparsity of kumi-daiko research, in the past decade there has been a small, valuable nucleus of articles, dissertations, and books published that are essential to a researcher of this topic.

Brian Vogel, in his “Transmission and Performance of Taiko in Edo Bayashi, Hachijo, and Modern Kumi-daiko Styles,” has produced an extremely informative dissertation on the modern practices of three particular styles of taiko drumming, with transcriptions of musical works normally passed on from teacher to student orally.⁹ In the dissertation, “Drumming between tradition and modernity: Taiko and neo-folk performance in contemporary Japan,”¹⁰ Shawn Morgan Bender provides detailed background information about Japan's famous kumi-daiko group Kodo, along with an anthropological study into the cultural origins found in kumi-daiko. Approaching the view of kumi-daiko from a pedagogical standpoint, Mark Tusler's dissertation “Sounds and Sights of Power: Ensemble Taiko Drumming (*kumi daiko*) Pedagogy in California and the

⁹ Brian Vogel, “Transmission and Performance of Taiko in Edo Bayashi, Hachijo, and Modern Kumi-Daiko Styles” (DMA diss., Rice University, 2009).

¹⁰ Shawn Morgan Bender, “Drumming Between Tradition and Modernity: Taiko and Neo-folk Performance in Contemporary Japan” (PhD diss., University of California San Diego, 2003).

Conceptualization of Power”¹¹ gives invaluable insight into the approach Japanese kumi-daiko teachers who have set up groups in California take to transmit taiko drumming techniques and ideas to students. Yet, none of these dissertations directly address the issue of kumi-daiko as a contemporary and evolving art form not directly descended from any one Japanese traditional musical style. However, they all touch on issues that aid in putting together a picture of kumi-daiko's origins and practices, without which an argument for kumi-daiko's unique placement in Japanese music could not be made.

Apart from these dissertations, the most recent research published about taiko drumming and kumi-daiko comes from various articles published in respected journals such as *Percussive Notes*. Terry O'Mahoney wrote an article detailing Kodo's history and how the group has become a global icon for Japanese music in “Kodo: Japanese Taiko Masters.”¹² Like Mark Tusler's dissertation, Kimberly Powell's article “The Apprenticeship of Embodied Knowledge in a Taiko Drumming Ensemble” looks at how the body and mind work together when performing in a kumi-daiko group.¹³ In the article “*Taiko Today: Performing Soundscapes, Landscapes, and Identities*,” Millie Creighton explores various uses of taiko drumming in contemporary Japanese society and how it is used to represent Japanese culture outside of its home country.¹⁴

¹¹ Mark Tusler, “Sounds and Sights of Power: Ensemble Taiko Drumming (*kumi daiko*) Pedagogy in California and the Conceptualization of Power” (PhD diss., University of California Santa Barbara, 2003).

¹² O'Mahoney, “Kodo,” 1.

¹³ Kimberly Powell, “The Apprenticeship of Embodied Knowledge in a Taiko Drumming Ensemble,” in *Knowing Bodies, Moving Minds: Towards Embodied Teaching and Learning* (London: Kluwer Academic, 2004).

¹⁴ Millie Creighton, “*Taiko Today: Performing Soundscapes, Landscapes, and Identities*” in *Performing Japan: Contemporary Expressions of Cultural Identity*, ed. Henry Johnson and Jerry Jaffe (Kent, UK: Global Oriental Folkestone, 2008).

Similarly, Linda Fujie questions the possible loss of local musical traditions in kumi-daiko in lieu of a more uniform national musical style in her article, “Japanese Taiko Drumming in International Performance: Converging Musical Ideas in the Search for Success on Stage.”¹⁵

The impact of kumi-daiko on the cultural image of Japan is an area of interest to many scholars and the resulting articles are invaluable in structuring an argument around kumi-daiko as a separate musical idiom in Japanese music. *Yōgaku: Japanese Music in the Twentieth Century*, by Luciana Galliano, addresses a myriad of topics relating to traditional Japanese music and its place in twentieth century Japan.¹⁶ Shawn Morgan Bender looks at the social and racial aspects related to kumi-daiko in “Of Roots and Race: Discourses of Body and Place in Japanese Taiko Drumming.”¹⁷

In his article “Gozo Daiko,” Michael Gould treats the idea of kumi-daiko as a blending of various musical traditions. “It is only within the past seventy years that the Japanese taiko drum has come out of its traditional setting and become the centerpiece of its own ensemble.”¹⁸ The article's main discussion, however, is centered around the author's experience of various pedagogical approaches to teaching a kumi-daiko ensemble. The same author has published an excellent article, “Taiko Classification and Manufacturing,”¹⁹ which is a concise dictionary of many of the drums used in a kumi-daiko ensemble,

¹⁵ Linda Fujie, “Japanese Taiko Drumming in International Performance: Converging Musical Ideas in the Search for Success on Stage” *The World of Music* 52, no. 1-3 (2010).

¹⁶ Luciana Galliano, *Yōgaku: Japanese Music in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Martin Mayes (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2002).

¹⁷ Shawn Morgan Bender, “Of Roots and Race: Discourses of Body and Place in Japanese Taiko Drumming,” *Social Science Japan Journal* 8, no. 4 (August 2005).

¹⁸ Michael Gould, “Gozo Daiko,” *Percussive Notes* 24, no. 2 (April 1996).

¹⁹ Michael Gould, “Taiko Classification and Manufacturing,” *Percussive Notes* 36, no. 3 (1998).

detailing the original uses of the drums in Japanese traditional music. Gould's articles give good points in forming a larger picture of kumi-daiko's repurposing of traditional instruments into a new idiom.

Much of the literature review research done for this study is necessarily composed of peripheral topics, due to the sparsity of scholarly research on the topic of kumi-daiko ensembles and the historical background needed to build a foundation of kumi-daiko's multi-faceted origins. Infinitely helpful to this research are the countless resources on the instruments and traditions of the various musical idioms that have been borrowed from in the formation of kumi-daiko. From these the analysis of Kodo's performances will be well-informed and the ideas about kumi-daiko as a new tradition supported.

Sir Francis Piggott, a late nineteenth century resident of Hong Kong, took many trips to Japan and later wrote a book about his keen observations of Japanese traditional music and performance practices in *The Music and Musical Instruments of Japan*.²⁰ *Japanese Music*, a book by Hisao Tanabe, gives a scholarly overview of most Japanese traditional music and instruments from the viewpoint of someone who had grown up within those musical traditions.²¹ A detailed history of Japanese music is invaluable when researching kumi-daiko and its origins, and Eta Harich-Schneider's *A History of Japanese Music* is great resource for foundational background research into this topic.²²

One of the most prolific musicologists writing on the subject of Japanese music is Dr. William P. Malm. In his book *Japanese Music & Musical Instruments* he

²⁰ Sir Francis Piggott, *The Music and Musical Instruments of Japan* (1909; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1971).

²¹ Hisao Tanabe, *Japanese Music* (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1959).

²² Eta Harich-Schneider, *A History of Japanese Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

not only covers, in great detail, the history of music and musical instruments in Japan, but he categorizes them into three main groups of musical idioms (religious/festival, theatre, and court) and discusses the meaning of specific instruments to each group.²³ Beyond strictly historical research, Malm also explores various ideas about how traditional Japanese music has functioned in society in the past and present in his book *Six Hidden Views of Japanese Music*.²⁴ In researching the various instruments used in kumi-daiko groups, it can be helpful to separate the instruments in William Malm's categories of music. The categories of theatre music, court music, and religious/festival music do have some overlap in their musical traditions and instruments, but even examining the overlaps can help explain how a certain instrument moved from a seventh century Japanese court ensemble to appear in a twenty-first century kumi-daiko group.

Exemplified in noh and kabuki traditions, some of the most treasured of Japanese musical customs come from the music used in Japanese theatre. In his book *Nagauta: The Heart of Kabuki Music*, Malm explores a specific form of kabuki theatre music, and he discusses dance and the place such an art form has in Japanese traditional music.²⁵ Samuel L. Leiter's *Kabuki Encyclopedia: An English-language Adaptation of 'Kabuki Jiten*, an English-language adaptation of a famous kabuki research book, provides useful dictionary definitions and short articles on various aspects of kabuki music and practice.²⁶ Sumi Gunji gives a brief

²³ William P. Malm, *Japanese Music & Musical Instruments*.

²⁴ William P. Malm, *Six Hidden Views of Japanese Music* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986).

²⁵ William P. Malm, *Nagauta: The Heart of Kabuki Music* (1963; reprint, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1973).

²⁶ Samuel L. Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia: An English-language Adaptation of 'Kabuki Jiten'* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1979).

overview of a few of the drums used in the theatre traditions in her articles

“Kotsuzumi”²⁷ and “Shimedaiko.”²⁸

Japanese court music has many traditions, with two broad categories being music for an instrumental ensemble only and music for ensemble and dancers. The book *Music of a Thousand Autumns: The Togaku Style of Japanese Court Music*, by Robert Garfias, explores the history and performance practice of a particular style of Japanese court music, with invaluable transcriptions of pieces and rhythms frequently used by the court drummers.²⁹ Stylized court dance and its musical accompaniment, called *bugaku* in Japanese, is discussed in Carl Wolz's book *Bugaku: Japanese Court Dance*.³⁰ Robert Garfias, in his book *Gagaku: The Music and Dances of the Japanese Imperial Household*, intelligently traces the significance of the interaction between the stage, instruments, costumes, and dances chosen in Japanese court performances.³¹

Many of the previously mentioned resources do delve into festival/religious music and its instruments, just not as its main focus. There are a few specific articles to be found on the topic that would relate to the kumi-daiko and its use of festival drums and traditions in performance. Onno Mensink's article, “The Hatchogane; Oral and Literary Aspects of an Almost Forgotten Musical Instrument,” takes a look at a Buddhist percussion instrument that is presently also used in street performance and the ways in which its use

²⁷ Sumi Gunji, “Kotsuzumi,” in *Musical Voices of Asia*, ed. Richard Emmert and Yuki Minegishi (Tokyo, Japan: Heibon-sha Tokyo, 1980).

²⁸ Sumi Gunji, “Shimedaiko,” in *Musical Voices of Asia*, ed. Richard Emmert and Yuki Minegishi (Tokyo, Japan: Heibon-sha Tokyo, 1980).

²⁹ Robert Garfias, *Music of a Thousand Autumns: The Togaku Style of Japanese Court Music* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975).

³⁰ Carl Wolz, *Bugaku: Japanese Court Dance*.

³¹ Robert Garfias, *Gagaku: The Music and Dances of the Japanese Imperial Household* (New York: Theatre Art Books, 1959).

has been transformed.³² In “Shoden: A Study in Tokyo Festival Music: When is Variation an Improvisation?” William Malm details how musicians in a festival ensemble will vary the traditional tunes and whether the variations are traditional and expected or if they cross the line into improvisation.³³ To fill in the background of some of the non-percussive instruments that can be found in a kumi-daiko ensemble, Willem Adriaansz's *The Kumiuta and Danmono Traditions of Japanese Koto Music* provides an in-depth look into koto music, notation, and performance practice.³⁴ With this look into the peripheries of topics surrounding the origin of kumi-daiko, a proper historical context can be created and utilized when viewing a kumi-daiko group's performance.

³² Onno Mensink, “The Hatchogane: Oral and Literary Aspects of an Almost Forgotten Musical Instrument,” in *The Oral and the Literate in Music*, ed. Tokumaru Yoshihiko and Osamu Yamaguchi (Tokyo, Japan: Academia Music Tokyo, 1986).

³³ William P. Malm, “Shoden: A Study in Tokyo Festival Music: When is Variation an Improvisation?” *Yearbook of the International Folk Music Council* 7 (1975).

³⁴ Willem Adriaansz, *The Kumiuta and Danmono Traditions of Japanese Koto Music* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973).

CHAPTER 2

THE HISTORY OF KODO

The history of Japan's most famous taiko ensemble reveals the diverse influences that have acted upon the group and formed it into the most recognizable kumi-daiko around the world. A wandering historian, Den Tagayasu, formed the group Ondekoza in 1969. He was disgusted with the lack of knowledge festival musicians and artists had of the old ways, but there was no one authority on what those old ways actually were and how they could be brought back into common knowledge. He professed a love of taiko, though he was no musician himself, and hoped to build a community of artists interested in revitalizing the traditions of Japanese folk art and music. He rented an old school house on Sado Island and invited a small group of ordinary Japanese citizens to live with him and learn how to be self-sufficient artists and musicians. The troupe was to focus on stage performance, traveling around earning money toward the final goal of an "Artisans' University." The first few years were very difficult. The people living in the commune had no musical training; they had no training in the folk arts at all. Due to their lack of musical knowledge, the group progressed slowly.³⁵

A turning point came when Mr. Tagayasu sent out several members to the town of Chichibu to attend the local festival and learn a specific drumming piece found only in that region. The members watched the local drummers' practices

³⁵ Bender, "Drumming Between Tradition and Modernity," 84.

and recorded the piece many times. They did not have the training to notate the rhythms, and general custom for festival music was for everything to be transmitted through oral and aural repetition. When the Ondekoza members returned to the Sado Island compound to try to recreate this piece, Den Tagayasu transcribed it as best he could, often simplifying the rhythms to make the piece easily understandable to the himself and his group. In the end, the group's version of the Chichibu drumming piece was, by their own accounts, a mechanical and spiritless interpretation. However, the piece's significance cannot be overestimated; Ondekoza's playing of this piece represents the first time an “outsider” group had learned and performed a local drumming style. From this quaky start, Ondekoza continued to learn regional drumming pieces and spread the knowledge acquired in the performing of these pieces to other beginning taiko groups.³⁶

Soon after, Ondekoza changed direction and began integrating many different musical styles into their playing. Tagayasu brought teachers from touring puppeteering groups, kabuki theater, noh theater, dance troupes, and court ensembles. These individuals would have residencies with the group, imparting their genre-specific knowledge. Material was still being drawn from festival music, but this new information allowed for the integration of new ideas into their historically-minded repertoire. Armed with this knowledge, Ondekoza gained performance ability and broadened their scope. Their performance was no longer purely historically minded; rather, it was a reimagining of the past with new techniques. This was the beginning of a new Japanese musical idiom.

³⁶ Ibid., 108.

In 1981, Den Tagayasu, the founder and coordinator for Ondekoza for over a decade, found himself at a philosophical impasse with a number of his members. Mr. Tagayasu left Sado Island that year, taking some members with him to form another taiko group elsewhere. The members that were left on Sado Island decided to continue with the group under a new name, Kodo. They chose this name because it can mean both “heartbeat” and “children of the drum.”³⁷ Their repertoire continued to have a folk-inspired style with art music techniques, but more often than not Kodo chose to perform new works. Since 1981, Kodo has become the most prominent, both popularly and academically, kumi-daiko in Japan. From their extensive touring schedule comes their 2004 DVD *Kodo: One Earth Tour Special*. Included in the DVD is some of their interpretations of traditional pieces, along with performances of newly composed works for kumi-daiko. The finale piece of this DVD is called *Sado e*. As the name suggests, the influence for this piece came from the group's long-term residence on the island of Sado. It is the longest and most extensive piece of their tour (see Appendix A and B for an instrument chart and analytical breakdown of *Sado e*). *Sado e* is a piece that uses all of the members of Kodo to show the group's talent for highlighting Japanese traditional instruments and techniques, while continuing to be an innovative force in the modern musical world .

³⁷ O'Mahoney, “Kodo,” 1.

CHAPTER 3

KABUKI INFLUENCES

Part of the innovation kumi-daiko presents in modern Japanese music is the mixed instrumentation used in performances. Instruments from court, theater, religious, and folk music can be seen working seamlessly together, with no demarkation between these different traditional styles. Kodo's *Sado e* is an excellent representation of the approach kumi-daiko has to Japanese instruments and traditions in a way that honors the old but does not remain in the past. At stage-left, there are multi-drum set-ups. Upstage, there are two huge taiko. To the right of the set-ups are a column of kneeling drummers, each with one drum in front and one to the left of the player. Finally, at stage-right is a variety of non-taiko instruments that have become an important part of many larger kumi-daiko, including string and wind instruments. Every tradition flows together without a notice as to what drum came from what background. To make these instruments and genres work together in a functional musical context, a new style is needed to balance these widely disparate musical influences.

Kabuki theatre, while not the oldest theatrical art form in Japanese history, is an art form nurtured and popularized by regular townsfolk with its dramatic plots and bright costumes.³⁸ In the first half of the seventeenth century, Japan saw kabuki become the biggest theatrical contribution of the Edo period, synthesizing all of the previous theatrical forms, both secular and religious, that had come

³⁸ Malm, *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*, 35.

before it.³⁹ A young female dancer at a temple, Okuni of Izumo, is often credited with inventing a combination of incantations and dances that later developed into kabuki plays. Decidedly secular, kabuki was originally performed with troupes of prostitutes, banned by the government, then banned again when the all-male troupes that formed afterward were found offensive for their obvious homosexual themes.⁴⁰ Kabuki managed to thrive throughout its trials, however, largely due to the theatre being open to members of all social classes. In a society where one's ranking normally limited what activities were deemed proper, kabuki allowed all classes to mingle and become excited about the same plays, actors, and singers.⁴¹

Revealing the underlying structure of a traditional kabuki play can aid in understanding the way music is woven tightly into the kabuki tradition. The dances of kabuki originally incorporated three different styles: dances with circular movements, dances with leaps, and dances consisting mainly of pantomimed gestures.⁴² Classically, there are six sections that make up a kabuki play, and much of the nomenclature and order is borrowed from the older, more aristocratic theatrical tradition of noh drama.

The first section of a play, the *okiuta*, is a brief introduction of music and text, setting the scene and preparing the audience for the entrance of the players.⁴³ Instrumentation depends on what the play is and what type of characters are being prepared. For instance, if a samurai character is to enter, then

³⁹ Ibid., 213.

⁴⁰ See note 39 above.

⁴¹ See note 39 above.

⁴² Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 49.

⁴³ Malm, *Nagauta*, 34.

traditionally an ensemble of three different drums and a flute are used, while if a goddess is about to enter then the instrumentation changes to a lone drum and a stringed instrument.⁴⁴ The next two sections, the michiyuki and the kudoki, consist of the entrances of the actors and a display of intricate choreography. The center of the kabuki play is the fourth section, the odoriji. It is often known by the entrance of the taiko stick drum, which has before this point been silent, and is frequently accompanied by the bamboo flute, voice, and stringed lute called the shamisen. After this highly stylized main dance form has taken place, a freer section of music is developed and then quickly concluded in the fifth and sixth sections, the chirashi and the dangire.⁴⁵

The opening of Kodo's *Sado e* is an excellent example of the influence kabuki theater has had on kumi-daiko. The first sound the audience hears is a drum called the o-daiko. This is a large drum, three to five feet in diameter, with a convex body and heads tacked on to the body at either end. One or both heads may be used, and the main playing areas are either the skins themselves or the rims near where the heads are tacked to the body.⁴⁶ Due to the size of the playing areas, the o-daiko is played with a pair of large wooden sticks or one even larger club.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Leiter, *Kabuki encyclopedia*, 85.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 35-36.

⁴⁶ Malm, *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*, 48.

⁴⁷ Gould, "Gozo Daiko," 3.



*Fig. 3.1: O-daiko.
Photograph courtesy of
Asano Taiko.*

Being such a large instrument, it would seem to be a difficult task to integrate it into the kabuki theatrical tradition, which is not known for its large productions. However, ever since kabuki was developed, the o-daiko has played an important role in the *hayashi*, or musical group, that makes up kabuki tradition.⁴⁸ The main roles for the odaiko in kabuki music are split into two main categories: ceremonial music and sound effects.⁴⁹ In its ceremonial role, the o-daiko is used to announce the opening of the theatre, the starting of the play, the entrance/exit of new characters, and the end of acts. As a sound effect drum, different playing techniques can be utilized to create things like the sound of wind blowing, rain falling, water flowing, sumo wrestlers fighting, and samurai swords clashing.⁵⁰

Each sound in kabuki, as in most Japanese traditional musics, has become highly stylized, with slight variations in sound only between different schools of kabuki training. In kabuki and *Sado e*, small rattles made of strung-together shells are brushed lightly against the heads of the o-daiko to simulate the sound of

⁴⁸ Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 76.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 77-91.

⁵⁰ See note 49 above.

wind. Kodo does not stray from the canon of sounds allowed the o-daiko, but instead changes the focus of the sound from just a background effect to the foreground of the audience's attention. Kabuki uses the o-daiko as a rhythmic basis for the dancers and as sound effects for other parts of the play. Japanese theater music is very much a melodically driven entity, so the drums used cannot be more prominent than the flutes and plucked instruments.⁵¹

Sado e employs two o-daiko in full view on stage, where as in kabuki there would be one in a screened room at stage right.⁵² As the piece progresses, the o-daiko become a very important feature musically and theatrically, with the two players using large sticks and powerful movements to emphasize the dynamic capability of the drums. During a short feature of the o-daiko a few minutes into the piece, the audience is greeted with grandiose, theatrical movements from the o-daiko players. The physicality required to be able to play this massive drum with such vigor is a sight to behold, and one that is not utilized in the traditions of Japanese theatre. While the o-daiko is a traditional kabuki drum, Kodo's re-imagining of its uses in an ensemble show a clear separation from tradition in an approach that can only be called new.

Example 3.1. O-daiko feature in Sado e. Musical example created by author.

The musical notation consists of three staves, each labeled 'Perc.' on the left. The first staff begins with a double bar line and a common time signature 'C'. It contains a series of rhythmic patterns represented by eighth and sixteenth notes, with many notes marked with an accent (>). The second staff starts with a measure number '6' above the first note, followed by a series of notes and rests, also with accents. The third staff starts with a measure number '10' above the first note, continuing the rhythmic sequence with notes and rests, and accents. The notation is written on a five-line staff with a double bar line at the end of each staff.

The other main drum from theatrical music presented in *Sado e* is the taiko stick drum (also known as the shime-daiko). This is a much smaller cylindrical drum than the o-daiko, and though it is small enough to fit under a performer's arm and play with the other arm, traditionally it is placed on a wooden stand that tilts the head of the drum toward the player and to the right.⁵³ The word *shime* is derived from the Japanese verb “to bind,” and the binding of the heads to the shell is what is most notable about this drum. The hides used for this drum are stretched over steel rings and then sewn to themselves to make a separate drum head for each side of the hardwood body.⁵⁴ The heads are secured to the body by ropes tied through ten holes drilled along the edges of the head, and a tuning rope ties all of the pieces together to allow the drum to be tuned with one rope instead of ten separate ones.⁵⁵



*Fig. 3.2. Shime-daiko.
Photograph courtesy
of Asano Taiko.*

The most common version of the shime-daiko has a very dry and high pitched sound compared to many other Japanese drums. The shime-daiko is a versatile instrument, and had been known as a folk instrument before the arts of noh and kabuki came about. Noh theater musicians use this drum as a main

⁵³ Gunji, “Shimedaiko,” 262.

⁵⁴ Varian, *The Way of Taiko*, 54-55.

⁵⁵ Gunji, “Shimedaiko,” 262.

instrument of the ensemble, divorcing its use of the shime-daiko from the drum's folk origins.⁵⁶ Its role in kabuki, however, embraces the shime-daiko's familiarity to most people as a drum seen at folk festivals and ceremonies by using smaller, thinner sticks to imitate the sound of the drum when used in folk music.⁵⁷ Lively dance scenes, festival scenes, and fanciful scenes with larger-than-life characters like ghosts and samurai are where the shime-daiko are most often used.⁵⁸ Audiences would hear the shime-daiko and understand that the drum was not only being played to create music, but to also represent the idyllic version of folk music that theatre music often portrays.

The rhythmic patterns used in theatre traditions are, like the plays themselves, highly stylized. Certain patterns are used with specific drums, and while there are pattern substitutions available to avoid having the same music droning on indefinitely, the order of substitutions has been codified.⁵⁹ The patterns used in noh and kabuki are separately named, and for the most part a piece of music consists of a list of the pattern names instead of notated music. Noh drum rhythms are most often set in eight-beat lines, with slight variations allowing the drummer to signal cadences or modulations to the other ensemble players.⁶⁰ Kabuki rhythms are a little freer, as they were originally developed to accompany the shamisen, a banjo-like instrument that can move a piece forward vertically (harmony) or horizontally (melody).⁶¹ Overall, rhythms are simple, with minutiae like accents, varying head sounds, and body movements helping

⁵⁶ Malm, *Nagauta*, 77.

⁵⁷ See note 56 above.

⁵⁸ Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 89.

⁵⁹ Malm, *Nagauta*, 80.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 83.

to distinguish the percussionists' art from just basic time-keeping and making it a soloing instrument in the theatre.

Kodo's use of the shime-daiko breaks tradition with all of the previously known uses of the drum. Unlike noh tradition, the shime-daiko is not used as a feature drum in the ensemble. In contrast to its folk origins and its idealized folk representation in kabuki music, the shime-daiko is not played as a solo drum in a musical ensemble. Instead, Kodo uses the stick drum as a part of two different multi-drum setups. In the first set-up introduced in *Sado e* the shime-daiko is the highest drum out of a set-up consisting of five drums. To create a cohesive and mellow sound among the five disparate sounding drums, the players use felt-covered mallets to cut down on the attack of the drums. The second set-up involves just the shime-daiko placed in front of the players, with a larger drum placed to the side of the player with its head perpendicular to the floor. Even though the stick drum is used soloistically for brief points in *Sado e*, the sound and usage of the drum has been modified from its theater background. These multi-drum set-ups are essentially new instruments, because the player must learn how to navigate around the set-up on a micro and a macro level. From adjusting the touch of each drum separately to creating a cohesive sound across the instruments, Kodo is showing kumi-daiko is not just a melting pot of traditional music, but a forging of a new musical genre.

Example 3.2. Time-keeping pattern used by the kneeling shine-daiko players in Sado e. Musical example created by author.



Example 3.3. Multi-Drum Solo from Sado e. Musical example created by author.

Percussion

5

Perc.

CHAPTER 4

GAGAKU INFLUENCES

While *Sado e* opens with instruments found in the musical traditions of Japanese theatre, it quickly becomes apparent that Kodo found inspiration in *gagaku*, the imperial court music and dance of Japan. It is Japan's oldest musical institution, founded at the turn of the eighth century under the government's Bureau of Music and continuing unceasingly to the present day.⁶² *Gagaku* contains a mixture of music taken from China, Korea, India, and Vietnam. From its founding until the twelfth century, the Japanese were prone to reforming the court music under each emperor, with the result being an interesting blend of repertoire.

It is important to point out that the art music of Japan became and still is strictly regulated by its performers. Emperor Saga enacted what is believed to be the last reforms made to the court music during the early Heian period of 833 to 850 AD.⁶³ This period in Japan's history is often referred to as its most sophisticated, with subtle emotions and restrained perfection in activities becoming aesthetic characteristics of Japanese high society that endure to this day.⁶⁴ The result of these aesthetic changes was that *gagaku*'s repertoire and techniques were pared down and refined to become elegant simplicity in performance. From the end of the Heian period, the close of the twelfth century,

⁶² Garfias, *Gagaku*, 1.

⁶³ Wolz, *Bugaku*, 9.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 10.

to the present day, gagaku has remained largely unchanged.

Since the 12th century, orchestral court music has been divided into two large categories: pieces claiming influence from China and India and pieces coming from Korea and Japan.⁶⁵ Depending on what class of music the piece is, different instruments are specifically grouped together from the three categories of wind, stringed, and percussion instruments. Musicians learning the gagaku percussion instruments take a great effort to preserve the limitations in style and technique set upon the ensemble. Everything from the strokes of each hand to the players' breathing are tightly choreographed. The percussion instruments have a set list of varying metric patterns, and for the most part those patterns are strictly adhered to regardless of what melodic material is being played. The result is a unique independence among the percussion section, playing at the same time as the other instruments but not necessarily being subservient to the melodic instruments.⁶⁶

The idea of independence among instrument groups and the use of traditional drums are the most obvious influences that gagaku has had on kumi-daiko. Kodo uses the instruments of gagaku to create independent set-ups and rhythms that are cleverly interwoven to make a new whole. One of the most common drums associated with kumi-daiko is the gagaku-rooted *chu-daiko*, most commonly referred to as just *taiko*. This drum is not a rope tensioned drum. The body of the drum is one piece of wood that has been hollowed out. There is a head on each end of the drum tacked directly on the wood body. This drum is now played at almost a forty-five degree angle toward the player, requiring a

⁶⁵ Tanabe, *Japanese Music*, 17.

⁶⁶ Garfias, *Music of a Thousand Autumns*, 43.

special stand to keep it at the proper height and angle. When this drum was first used in court music, it was suspended from a stand so that the heads were perpendicular to the floor.⁶⁷ Still in use today is the tradition of only one of the heads being struck, even though the original set-up allowed a player access to both heads of the drum. Unfortunately, many records used by musicologists use the word “taiko” in reference to different drums used in the court ensemble. As a result, specific descriptions of the drums and how they were used in the ensemble are not always readily available. Because the word “taiko” is used in so much research, the importance and influence of court music can be blown out of proportion in regards to modern kumi-daiko. Yes, the taiko used in the traditional court ensemble is the most recognizable drum in an ensemble today. However, groups like Kodo do not follow the rigid guidelines that court musicians follow in regards to how they play the taiko.



Fig. 4.1: Chu-daiko, part of the Nagado- daiko family. Photograph courtesy of Asano Taiko.

The rules binding the traditional musics of Japan are strict and are controlled by a governmental department that has existed for centuries. Masters of the instruments of court music only train a certain number of apprentices, and

⁶⁷ Malm, *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*, 92.

only after so many years of practice and tutelage can apprentices be allowed to perform with an actual ensemble.⁶⁸ The rules set upon noh and kabuki theater are much the same, even though their traditions came centuries later. As a result, the art music of Japan is seen as an exclusionary art-form, something that is not within the reach or understanding of the ordinary Japanese citizen.

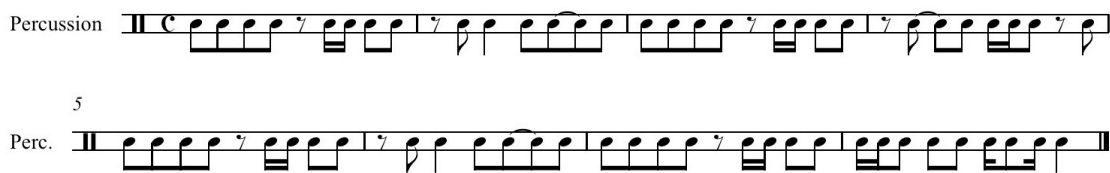
Kodo, as exemplified in *Sado e*, respects the discipline and vast knowledge that artists of the traditional Japanese musics possess, but melds the various drums, styles of playing, and rhythmic patterns into an entirely different musical idiom. In a normal theatre or court setting, there is a hierarchy of drums and a limitation on what patterns can be played on specific drums. Kodo does away with this idea in several different ways. First, the sheer number of drums on stage is a break from tradition. Traditionally, each style of drum is able to be featured due to small numbers in the ensembles overall, hence the development of specific style and sound minutiae. Second, the multi-drum configurations create an equality between the different drums, for they are chosen for their basic sound and how that sound blends with the others. It is not important to distinguish the minute sound differences available on the small shime-daiko that have been explored by the traditional arts, because within the context of playing the shime-daiko next to a large chu-daiko, such minutiae would be inaudible to the audience.

Kodo takes its large variety and number of drums available in *Sado e* and uses them in ways to give momentum to the piece. A good example of this is the main rhythmic theme present throughout *Sado e*. This piece starts out featuring

⁶⁸ Ibid., 89.

one instrument group or soloist after another. These features are often set into four bar increments, often with little or no transition material from one to the next. Many of the features seem improvised to a certain extent. With little melodic or harmonic progression, *Sado e* could be viewed as a collection of disparate phrases, if not for the main rhythmic theme. This simple phrase, which could be argued to be a two-bar theme with variations or a full eight-bar theme, is repeated by all of the drummers at various points to create impacts and momentum during *Sado e*. In keeping with traditional musics, it is a simple duple based rhythm. Kodo uses this theme brilliantly, not only using it for big ensemble moments, but keeping it in the audience's mind by having the soloists' improvise around it and having it serve as the time-keeping rhythmic cell at certain points. By distributing the theme around the ensemble and using it tutti, reminiscent of Western orchestral writing, *Sado e* gains a forward momentum that would otherwise be difficult to achieve in an improvisatory piece featuring mostly non-pitched percussion.

Example 4.1. Main rhythmic theme in Sado e. Musical example created by author.



This strict adherence to rules and ancient practices of traditional Japanese music is a large part of why kumi-daiko cannot be regarded as a direct descendant of art music. The innovation inherent in kumi-daiko does not mix well with the ensembles found in court and theater settings. Because of the

guidelines set forth for traditional musicians, court and theater players can only hope to perfect the ancient techniques and strive for a historically accurate performance of a centuries-old piece of music. Kumi-daiko is an art-form that breaks all those rules, choosing instruments and techniques from many different sorts of music and creating something new and entirely separate. Kumi-daiko takes the availability of folk music and the prestige of art music and melds their ideas to form a new music that all Japanese citizens can call their own.

CHAPTER 5

FOLK MUSIC INFLUENCES

Many of the drums used by groups like Kodo are not commonly found in Japanese art music. A large portion of the drums used come from a folk music background. For over fifteen-hundred years the Shinto and Buddhist religions have played a major factor in Japanese peoples' lives. Religious and folk music of Japan are tightly entwined, and all traditional Japanese festivals have some root in religion. Buddhist temples use various drums to help with the chanting of prayers, believing Buddha's voice can be heard through the sound. Shintoists believe that the spirit world can be accessed through the use of drums, making taiko very useful for regular townsfolk to communicate with the gods.⁶⁹ Japanese festivals grew out of religious rites, so it is common to see the same drums and techniques used in religious and festival music.⁷⁰ There are several taiko seen in *Sado e* with a festival music background including the shime-daiko, ko-daiko, chu-daiko, and o-daiko. The shime-daiko is identical to the taiko stick drum used in kabuki theater; their difference lies in the way they are used. The ko-daiko, chu-daiko, and o-daiko make the Nagado family of taiko, each one different only in its size (ko daiko being the smallest and o-daiko being the largest). These taiko are the most popular instrument at festivals; all Japanese people recognize what they are and how they can be used to celebrate a harvest, call a spirit, or honor

⁶⁹ Gould, "Gozo Daiko," 41.

⁷⁰ Bender, "Drumming Between Tradition and Modernity," 157.

the dead.⁷¹ Festival and religious tradition shows that one person plays one drum, with few exceptions. Festivals usually consisted of only a few drums, so there was no reason to have more than one person on a drum. Only a certain amount of people per village would know the proper techniques, so festival drums are larger to accommodate the crowds. In *Sado e* Kodo does not use these drums as the soloistic instruments that tradition dictates. Instead, they become part of a multi-drum setup and are balanced with the other drums. They are never allowed to be the prominent sound, instead supporting the drums that do not normally have a chance to stand out in their traditional roles.

Kodo does not adapt just the drums from festival and religious music to their new uses. An interesting homage to Buddhist chanting and Shinto music can be heard during a melodically driven section suddenly introduced after a feature of the multi-drum configurations. The koto, shamisen, and bamboo flutes play repeating melodic patterns, after which the voices join in. Contrary to the chanting of the Buddhist tradition, the voices in *Sado e* remain wordless. The hyoushigi, small wooden clappers similar to Latin claves, join the singers. Hyoushigi are one of the three main instruments found in Shinto music.⁷²



Fig. 5.1: Hyoushigi. Photograph courtesy of Asano Taiko.

⁷¹ "Taiko Drums," Taiko.com website, accessed on Nov. 30, http://www.taiko.com/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=39.

⁷² Malm, *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*, 46.

This interesting meld of instruments creates a very peaceful and meditative atmosphere on stage, but Kodo is careful to remain neutral and uses the instruments in a way that creates an atmosphere of tranquility and not necessarily one of religious devotion. Kodo has always had world-wide knowledge of taiko as a goal of their organization, and modifying their Japanese religious traditions for use in their group is a diplomatic way to celebrate their cultural background and not offend people of different backgrounds.

CHAPTER 6

NON-PERCUSSIVE KUMI-DAIKO INSTRUMENTS

Not all students of kumi-daiko are aware that there are many instruments involved in the ensemble other than drums. *Sado e* introduces the audience to some of the melodic instruments that can be found in kumi-daiko, such as the koto, shamisen, kokyū, and the takebue. The koto is a Chinese-derived plucked string instrument that traces its roots back to the court music of ancient Japan. The shamisen and the takebue (also known as a bamboo flute) are both commonly found in theater and court music. The shamisen is a plucked lute with three strings, rectangular body, and an unfretted neck.⁷³ It resembles a Western banjo and is played in much the same way, but the tuning gives a distinctly Eastern sound. The kokyū is Japan's only bowed instrument, and it has a history as an accompanying instrument in koto ensembles. With a sound similar to the Western violin, the kokyū was popular also in accompanying dance ensembles and playing off-stage in theatre ensembles.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, with the introduction of Western instruments to Japanese musical culture, solo kokyū literature is now rare and its use in ensembles becoming increasingly sparse.⁷⁵

⁷³ Malm, *Naguata*, 56.

⁷⁴ Malm, *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*, 179.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 180.



Fig. 6.1- Takebue. Photograph courtesy of Asano Taiko.



Fig. 6.2. Hand-colored Japanese print, circa 1900. Left to right: shamisen, an early 20th century version of the koto, and the kokyū. Public domain image procured from Wikimedia Commons.

These instruments are a testament to the long-standing Japanese view of drums being a support for the melodic instruments, but not to be seen as the foremost instruments in this ensemble. Whether the drums are sound effects off-stage in kabuki theater or support for the koto in a court music piece, traditional drums in Japanese art music have been seen as a secondary instrument. Kodo

seeks to break this idea in *Sado e*, combining the theatrical and bombastic approach to drums that festival drumming has embodied for centuries with the support of some of the most traditional melodic instruments Japan has to offer. When the bamboo flute and the koto enter the piece, it is as transition material from one set of taiko to another. Just before the melodic instruments enter, the large o-daiko are soloing, with one man on each drum with huge sticks flying above head level. The rhythms are not complex, as it is difficult to play the o-daiko quickly, but the playing is bombastic and theatrical. The bamboo flute and koto enter as the o-daiko players finish a phrase of music and put their sticks down. The transition music does place an emphasis on the melodies being played and not the drums, showing Kodo's familiarity with kabuki's usage of drums in the theater ensemble. What makes this different from theater, though, are the length of the melodic phrases and its use in the piece as a whole. The melodic material is twenty seconds long, and there is never a full stop to the use of taiko. The bamboo flutes come in strong, followed by the group of koto. The taiko are played very quietly at the beginning of the transition material, and by the end of the twenty seconds they have taken the emphasis from the melodic instruments and placed it upon themselves. This passage shows how Kodo pays homage to kabuki theater, but is not chained to its traditions; the members are taking previously conceived ideas about how drums function in a mixed ensemble and changing them to show how versatile taiko can be in a musical ensemble.

CHAPTER 7

THE BEGINNING OF THE KUMI-DAIKO MOVEMENT

Kodo chooses to teach and tour world-wide to spread their love of taiko to as many different cultures as possible. This is appropriate for kumi-daiko because the first ensembles other than Ondekoza formed in the 1960s and 1970s were started by men with backgrounds in Western musical styles. O-suwa Daiko and Sukeroku Daiko, along with Ondekoza (later becoming Kodo), were the first three major taiko ensembles formed and made popular throughout Japan, not just regionally.⁷⁶

Daihachi Oguchi was the founder of O-suwa Daiko. In the late 1960s he was making a living as a jazz musician, when a friend asked him to interpret a manuscript that had been found in the city of O-suwa. As he researched, Oguchi learned the basic ideas of how the piece was originally played; however, he did not perform the piece as it was written. Instead of playing the piece with the bare minimum of performers that are usually used at festivals, he decided to add drums and parts to fill out the piece. He reinvented how taiko could be used in a piece, choosing to set up various taiko in a drum-set-like arrangement. This allowed for new sounds and techniques for taiko to develop. O-suwa Daiko is one of the largest taiko schools in existence today, influencing thousands of kumi-daiko world-wide through apprenticeships, workshops, and performances. Kodo uses Oguchi's ideas in *Sado e* with their own ideas incorporated, with the

⁷⁶ Bender, "Drumming Between Tradition and Modernity," 68.

multi-drum setups used by many of the members. The sets are not standardized in any way, so there are multitudes of sounds available for the performers to use. Like the jazz influences Oguchi brought to O-suwa Daiko, Kodo often lays down a simple beat with one drummer while having other players embellishing rhythms on top of the established pattern. In other pieces played by the group, swing rhythms are incorporated at times. These are things that come from a Western jazz tradition. While at times elements of popular Western music seem to appear in Kodo and other kumi-daiko's music, there has been no published academic research on the influence of commercial music on kumi-daiko.

Sukeroku Daiko is the third part of the trio of main kumi-daiko influencers. In the early 1960s in Tokyo, festivals were enjoying a revival due to government-sponsored community building efforts.⁷⁷ Four teenagers from different areas came to know each other at a large summer festival, each competing for the top prize in a solo taiko contest held every year. They started a taiko club together and began experimenting with adding rhythms and acrobatics to the traditional pieces that they had learned at festivals. Through one of the members, the group started to play in a nightclub. Their shows incorporated dance, folk songs, and shamisen and taiko playing.⁷⁸ They played various taiko at different angles than was tradition, and used a medley of musical styles in their playing. The shows had a Western approach, emphasizing the theatrical aspect inherent in Western popular music. Through the years Sukeroku Daiko's flashy style and bombastic approach to music has influenced

⁷⁷ Ibid., 75.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 80.

many kumi-daiko throughout Japan and in the United States.⁷⁹ Kodo, while not as flashy as Sukeroku, has adopted some of the more theatrical approaches to their shows. *Sado e* is a perfect example, with having two large o-daiko featured by men waving the sticks high above their heads before slamming them into the drumheads. All of the members use coordinated movements, making simple rhythms seem like a dance with special stick twirls and arm movements. The energy that Kodo's members display every moment of *Sado e* reveals the innovation and vitality that this new music idiom creates in the Japanese people.

⁷⁹ See note 74 above.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

It cannot be denied that kumi-daiko owes its origins to the Japanese traditional music genres. However, too many facets of kumi-daiko are based on contemporary innovations for this genre to be a direct descendant of any Japanese traditional art form. These new innovations are revealed through compositional style, instrumentation, and performance techniques. The instruments used in Kodo's *Sado e* have long histories in Japanese traditional music, but the ways they are utilized show a clear break with tradition. Innovation that is generally denied to musicians of the historical arts is now freely accepted and encouraged in groups like Kodo and thousands of other kumi-daiko. The “Way of Taiko” may be thousands of years old, but kumi-daiko is an emerging art form finding its own way into a nation caught between tradition and modernity.

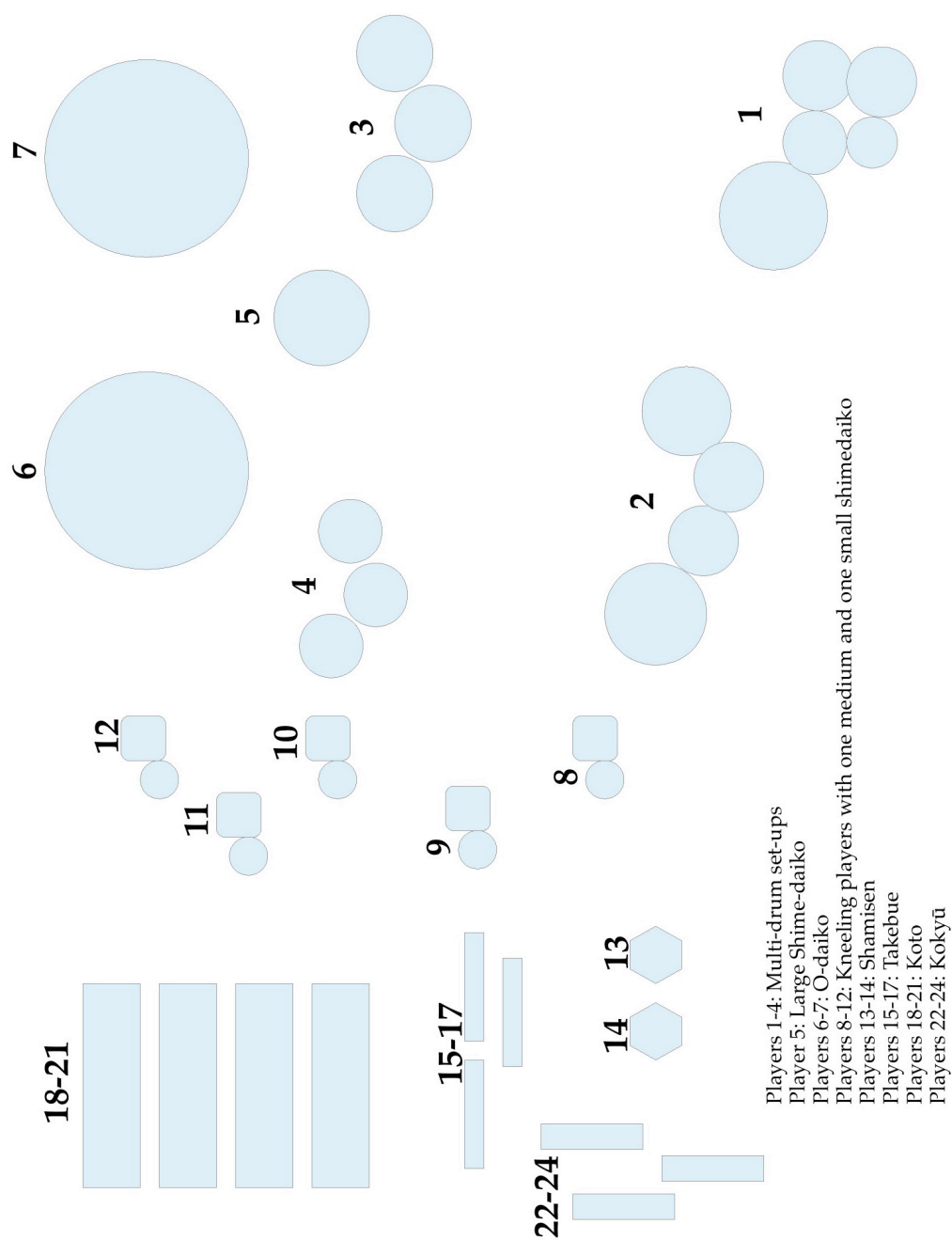
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APPENDIX A- SET-UP CHART FOR *SADO E*



APPENDIX B- *SADO E* MUSICAL EXAMPLES

(in chronological order)

Player 1: Multi-drum Solo (first 8 bars after the Introduction)

Percussion 

5
Perc. 

Players 8-12: Time-keeping rhythmic cell during the second half of Player 1's solo
(second 8 bars after the Introduction)

Percussion 


Player 6-7: O-daiko Feature after Player 2's Solo


Percussion 

6
Perc. 

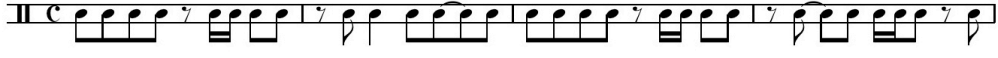
10
Perc. 


Player 5 and Ensemble: 4 Bar Section of Call, then ensemble Response

Percussion 

Perc. 

All Drummers: Main Rhythmic Theme: Tutti Passage (this is played by individual drummers at various times throughout, and returns as a tutti passage)

Percussion 

Perc. 

APPENDIX C- ANALYSIS OF *SADO E*

Sado e Analysis Page 1

Introduction	16 Bar Solo (8+8)	9 Bars
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The introduction to this piece is unmetered It lasts for roughly 30 seconds The two o-daiko players (6+7) and player 4 are rubbing shells on the drumheads Player 1 foreshadows his upcoming solo with small rhythmic cells interspersed with silence and/or unmeasured rolls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Player 1 solos for 8 bars unaccompanied over the continuing wind sounds from Players 4, 6, and 7 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Players 8-12 (kneeling with a taiko to their left sides and a kotsuzumi in front of them) play quarter notes underneath Player 1's continuing solo, slowly rising in dynamics until the end of the 8 bars, where they dynamically overtake Player 1's solo
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Player 1 and Players 8-12 play at roughly the same dynamic Player 1's material remains similar to his previous solo, becoming more background to the changing rhythms and higher drum sounds from Players 8-12

Sado e Analysis Page 2

16 Bars	44 Bar Solo (32+12)	4 Bars trans.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Players 2+3 are the only instruments playing. • Player 2's material is more solo-like, with Player 3 mainly keeping time and helping to embellish Player 2's part. • Both Players are only playing on a single drum, creating a duo between just two sonorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player 3 drops into the background of Player 2's solo and just provides time • Player 2 expands his solo from playing on one drum to playing on all four drums in his set-up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After 32 bars, Player 2 introduces a more embellished version of will become the tutti rhythmic cell throughout the rest of the piece
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player 2 finishes solo • Koto players (18-21) enter • Kneeling drummers (8-12) again keep time with quarter notes • Player 1 begins a simple, repetitive pattern on his setup • Player 2 fills in some of Player 1's pattern with quick single stroke rolls

Sado e Analysis Page 3

60 Bar Solo (8+8+20+24)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player 1 continues his simple pattern, decreasing his dynamics over the first 8 bars of Player 2's second solo, then remaining underneath Player 2 for the duration of the solo • Player 2 moves around his setup for the first 8 bars • Kneeling players continue to play quarter note time underneath everything • O-daiko players (6+7) punctuate the larger phrases with simple hits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player 2 spends 8 measures on his highest and smallest drum • He plays a simple but impressively fast single stroke rolls among running sixteenth notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The next 20 bars are still centered on the higher drum, but Player 2 seems to improvise more • Player 2 utilizes very fast singles among the highest drum and the drums to its immediate right and left, reminiscent of a drumset player's solo on tom-toms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The solo seems to become even more improvisatory • Player 2 uses less single stroke rolls, but moves around all four drums in his setup more in the last 24 measures of the solo • The last 4 measures are very simple, bombastic, and big, seemingly cuing the rest of the group that the solo is going to come to an end
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Sado e Analysis Page 4

12 Bars	12 Bars	8 Bars	24 Bars
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These 12 bars feature the largest drums, the o-daiko (players 6+7) The first four bars have the kneeling players (8-12) playing off of the o-daiko hits The second four bars have bamboo xylophones played by the koto players (18-21) The last four bars show an interaction between the o-daiko and Player 3's large 3 drum setup 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> O-daiko drops out Bamboo flutes (takebue), koto, and shamisen enter Kneeling players (8-12) also enter and interact with the melodic instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Call and response between Player 5 and all of the other drummers Player 5 plays four bars of a rhythm, and all of the other drums echo in the second four bars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other than the o-daiko (Players 6+7) interjected on the rims of their drums, Players 3,4, and 5 are the only players for 24 bars Improvisatory in nature, Player 3 takes 8 bars to feature, then Player 4 follows with his own 8 bars Player 5 is always playing, interacting with the improvisations at a lower dynamic than the featured multi-drum players The last 16 bars of this section meld into a true trio of interaction between Players 3, 4, and 5

8 Bar Feature	20 Bars	8 Bars	24 Bars
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With the exception of Player 1 keeping time during this feature, all of the other drummers play a tutti passage The first two bars of the feature were foreshadowed by an earlier solo, and will return multiple times in other tutti passages The last six bars contain slight variations from the first two bars, but the basic patterns remain the same to show the importance of the passage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two shamisen players (13+14) are featured for 20 measures They are playing the shamisen with a plectrum The kneeling drummers (Players 8-12) keep time throughout with steady sixteenth notes The last six bars have the o-daiko (Players 6+7) enter with simple eighth note figures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is transition material from the shamisen feature into the upcoming voice feature The koto (Players 18-21) play a simple repeated two bar figure The takebue enter with a separate melody for the latter four bars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocal Feature Almost all of the players harmonizing throughout There are no words The koto continues its repeating pattern The shamisen play simple repeated patterns throughout Time is kept by the shamisen and kneeling drummers The first entrance of the shakubyoshi (clave-like instruments) begins with the vocals and continues intermittently during the feature The shakubyoshi are played by all of the standing drummers (Players 1-7)

Sado e Analysis Page 6

<i>14 Bars</i>	<i>~33 Bars</i>	<i>~14 Bars</i>	<i>Fermata</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transition material from the vocal feature to the shakubyoshi feature This begins the part of the piece that is not as cut and dry in terms of bars and sections. The rest of the piece contains large sections of improvisatory-like passages, obscuring the easier to hear four bar chunks from the first half of the piece 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shakubyoshi feature Players 8-12 and 18-21 are now playing shakubyoshi with the standing drummers (Players 1-7) Tutti passages followed by split parts by smaller numbers of players, then a final tutti part into the next section 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Melodic instruments (koto, takebue, and bowed kokyuu) enter at an entirely new and slower tempo The shakubyoshi continue with their original tempo, but start to fade dynamically to be underneath the melodic instruments The two different tempi and the extreme rubato used by the kokyuu players (Players 22-24) creates a feeling of slowly shifting sound masses instead of metronomic rhythmic movements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The fermata echoes the introduction of the piece through the use of shells on drumheads in Players 3, 6, and 7, and in the unmeasured interjections of drum rolls The koto players (18-21) create new sound effects by rubbing their fingers at different speeds and tensions across their strings Re-introduction of the three note bamboo xylophone, used by one of the koto players Players 1 and 4 begin the transition out of the fermata by agreeing on a quarter note tempo together, then having Player 1 start into the next section of seemingly metered material

Sado e Analysis Page 7

Very slow buildup: ~154 Bars (39+67+48)			Tutti 8 Bars
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The first 39 bars are the most easily delineated by the slow crescendo and sudden drop in dynamics by Player 4's timekeeping quarter notes Many of the sound effects started in the fermata continue intermittently 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Player 4 stops his time-keeping role; Players 8-12 play a steady beat but with no inflection to indicate phrase beginnings or endings Players 1-5 trade small features of seemingly improvised passagework A large crescendo in Players 1-5 brings everyone together and a sudden drop helps give an indication of the next section's beginning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Player 4 returns to his time-keeping role All of the other standing drummers (Players 1-7) seem to be improvising around their drums with simple runs There is a slow crescendo throughout these bars Though it is difficult to tell which player marks the last few bars of the crescendo leading into the tutti section, the sudden large arm movements by the Players indicate nonverbal cues as to when the top of the crescendo is to be. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A return of the tutti rhythmic cell Slightly different variations to the passage, mainly through a change in which size drums play which part of the rhythms

Sado e Analysis Page 8

<i>~16 Bars</i>	<i>~20 Bars</i>	<i>~26 Bars</i>	16 Bars
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loud eighth note interjections by the o-daiko (Players 6+7) every two measures • Koto (Players 8-21) and shamisen (Players 13-14) feature; both instruments are using implements to create a plucking sound on their strings • Kneeling drummers (Players 8-12) keeping time with sixteenth notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This section begins with a quick improv section from all of the players, largely unmetred sound effects • Player 7 maintains a steady beat with his finger on the o-daiko, but it is not audible until a couple of bars into the section, making the accuracy of the number of bars hard to pin down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Player 2 feature; this feature seems to refer back to his previous two features at the beginning of the piece, but seems even more improvisatory than his earlier solos • A slow crescendo starts after the first eight bars, and the other standing drums begin interjecting quickly into Player 2's feature • Again, large body movements by one or more key players seem to get everyone in the same place a couple of bars before the next tutti passage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recurrence of the tutti drum theme • The most noticeable change in this passage is the addition of the shamisen and koto (Players 13, 14, 18-21) starting in the fifth bar • This tutti occurrence is twice as long as the previous statements of the rhythmic cell • With the general dynamic being very loud and most of the instruments playing at once, it is visibly and audibly noticeable that the end of the piece is approaching

Finale (8+8+8)

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All instruments are now playing • The most notable sound entrance comes from the bamboo flutes, due to their drastically different tone quality • The underlying timekeepers are using fast-paced sixteenth notes, lending a feeling of forward momentum • O-daiko (Players 6+7) again provide delineation every two bars for the first four bars and every bar for the last four bars with loud eighth note interjections | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The last eight bars are very similar to the previous eight bars, with the exception of a large retard in the final two bars • The last sounds heard are the takebue and the koto reverberations |
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